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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000856

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STATE FOR AF/W-EPLUMB AND INR/AA-BGRAVES

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TAGS: PGOV PREL IS IV

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: UPDATE ON DEMOBILIZATION,  
DISARMAMENT, AND REINTEGRATION

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) A  
ND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. Alain Michel Lobognon, Communications Director at the Prime Minister's Office, and Jean-Luc Stalon, Chief of the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Unit, told Poloff that agreement on the ranks of the Forces Nouvelles (FN) combatants who will be integrated into the national military is near. According to Stalon, 5,000 FN combatants will be integrated into the national military (Forces Armees Nationales de Cote d'Ivoire - FANCI) and the remaining 5,000 will be demobilized. Stalon said UNOCI has proposed to the Minister of Defense that weapons be collected at the 17 regrouping process sites identified in the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) and requested U.S. support for this position. According to Stalon, the government has devised a "civic" program that will include all former militia and the 5,000 FN to be demobilized. Stalon stated that UNOCI continues to conduct patrols along the green line because the 6 mixed brigades that were to be deployed there are not yet operational. Stalon said the Integrated Command Center is dysfunctional. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Communications Director at the Prime Minister's office, Alain Michel Lobognon, told Emboffs August 2 that the soldiers who will leave the Forces Nouvelles (FN) have already been chosen, but what activity they will engage in to reintegrate them into society has not yet been determined. Lobognon said the 2 FN generals will remain generals, 450 FN officers' ranks will be harmonized with those of their counterparts in the national military, and the 35 non-commissioned officers (among them many of the so-called Zone Commanders or "ComZones," such as Cherif Ousmane) who were promoted to officer rank will remain at their current grade until national elections are held and will then retire.

¶3. (C) The Chief of the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Unit, Jean-Luc Stalon, told Poloff August 6 that UNOCI exerts little influence over the Ivorian Government. Stalon said the challenge facing UNOCI is to ensure that DDR meets minimum international standards. According to Stalon, elections are a priority for the Ivorians and DDR is not.

¶4. (C) Stalon stated that both the government and the FN, but especially the FN, have exaggerated the number of combatants. Stalon estimated that the FN do not have more than 10,000 combatants. He added that the ratio between FN combatants and weapons is low because many FN combatants never engaged in battle or had weapons. Stalon said the disarmament process now only affects the FN since it is completed in the

south of the country. He said that of the 4,000 so-called "New Recruits" quickly brought into the FANCI after the 2002 outbreak of conflict, 1,000 were released from service some time ago and the remaining 3,000 were unilaterally integrated into the national military by a presidential decree, which was in violation of the disarmament agreement. Stalon expressed surprise that the FN accepted this. He said it is estimated that there are 10,000 militia in the west of the country and that only 2,000 of them are programmed for disarmament. Stalon explained that 981 militia members were disarmed last year, but since they only had 105 weapons, UNOCI advised the government to suspend the program in light of the low combatant to weapon ratio. (Comment: In our recent visit to the west, the UNOCI officials were adamant that elections in the west would not succeed unless disarmament had taken place due to the continuing bitter land disputes - and militia backers - between foreigners (allogenes) and natives (autochtones).

¶5. (SBU) Stalon said 5,000 of the total 10,000 FN combatants will be reintegrated into the national military, half of them in 2007 and the other half in 2008. He noted that some members of the national military will have to retire to make room for them since the national military's ranks cannot exceed 22,000. Stalon said agreement has almost been reached on the rank issue. Stalon said 15 senior officers will keep their ranks while the others' ranks will have to be harmonized with those of their counterparts in the national military.

¶6. (C) Stalon said the FN want to keep their weapons until the identification hearings ("audiences foraines") were completed. However, the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) identifies 9 regrouping process sites in the north and 8 in the south and Stalon said the UN has proposed to the Minister

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of Defense that weapons be collected at these sites. Stalon requested U.S. support for this proposal because elections cannot take place without proper disarmament. (Comment: We will follow up on ways in which the U.S. might be helpful.)

¶7. (C) Stalon told Poloff that the government has devised a "civic" program that will include all former militia from the west, the militia in Abidjan, and the 5,000 FN to be demobilized. According to Stalon, the program will last 18 months and target 40,000 young people. He said it will be conducted in centers throughout the country and those in the program will receive a salary, clothes, food, and lodging. Stalon said the Government of Israel is advising the Government of Cote d'Ivoire on how to begin the program. Stalon finds it interesting that the Government of Cote d'Ivoire has not asked the international community to fund the program and said it is a way to address the problem of unemployment.

¶8. (C) Stalon told Poloff that 6 mixed brigades were to be deployed along the green line of what was the Zone of Confidence. Stalon stated that only 3 of the 6 brigades are operational and that even the 3 that are operational are not performing at their full capacity. (Comment. As of August 10, 5 of the brigades are operational. But, according to UNOCI officials, in the west, the mixed brigades have limited ability to control the various militias operating in the area.) According to Stalon, this is because some FN do not want to participate until the audiences foraines take place and some have complained that they are not receiving a salary. As a result, UNOCI is conducting patrols along the green line. Stalon called the Integrated Command Center set up by the OPA a "joke." He said the Integrated Command Center has no decision making power and all disagreements have to be bumped up to the Chiefs of Staff for resolution, which sometimes never comes. Stalon said the Integrated Command Center is poorly staffed and did not even participate in the July 30 "flame of peace" symbolic disarmament ceremony

in Bouake.

¶9. (C) Comment: The Ouaga agreement is a beginning, but much remains to be done. Among the essential ingredients to bring about sustainable peace is disarmament, therefore any U.S. expertise in this area may be quite valuable. Another key to eventual success would be inclusion in the process of the major opposition party leaders Ouattara and Bedie. Without Ouattara and RDR's acquiescence, the northern leaders will remain skeptical of the process of identification "audiences foraines" needed to complete the electoral process.

HUDDLESTON